

SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS

Too often, people ignore severe thunderstorms, because they believe only a tornado will cause damage or threaten their lives. The fact is a majority of the property damage and injuries from thunderstorms each year is from high thunderstorm winds and large hail – not tornadoes.

BEFORE SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS

Know the terms used to describe severe thunderstorm threats:

Severe Thunderstorm Watch -- *Severe thunderstorms are possible in or near your area.* Stay alert for the latest weather information. Be prepared to take shelter.

Severe Thunderstorm Warning -- *Severe thunderstorms will be approaching or are occurring.* Severe thunderstorms produce damaging wind in excess of 60 mph and/or hail 1.00" in diameter or larger. Seek safe shelter. Keep in mind that winds from a severe thunderstorm can cause significant property damage, injury or even death – even though there is no tornado present.

Significant Weather Advisory – Strong thunderstorms with wind gusts of 40 to 55 mph and/or hail less than 1.00" in diameter will be approaching or are occurring.

Wind gusts from severe thunderstorms can do as much or more damage than many tornadoes! Extended power outages, downed trees and extensive damage to roofs, doors and windows can all occur from straight line wind gusts or downbursts of wind. Check the weather forecast before leaving for extended outdoor periods and postpone plans if severe weather is imminent.

DURING SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS

- Stay away from all windows and doors during the storm. If you can do it safely, draw the shades or blinds to reduce the risk from flying glass if it breaks due to high winds.
- Monitor the radio or television for the latest weather information.
- Avoid using a corded telephone or other electrical appliances until the storm passes.
- Turn off air conditioners. If lightning strikes, a power surge could damage the compressor.
- Delay taking baths or showers until after the storm passes due to the lightning threat.
- **If outdoors, seek shelter IMMEDIATELY!** If you can hear thunder, you are close enough to the storm to be struck by lightning.
- If you are driving, pull safely to the shoulder away from trees and power lines. Lightning can flash from trees or power poles and strike a vehicle. The rubber tires do NOT keep lightning from striking a vehicle. Normally, in the open, a vehicle is a safe shelter from lightning. Avoid touching metal parts of the vehicle when lightning is nearby.
- If you are in a boat when a thunderstorm threatens, you should attempt to reach shore as quickly as possible.
- If you find yourself in a position where there is no immediate shelter available, find a low spot away from trees and power poles.

AFTER SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS

- Monitor the radio or television for emergency information or instructions.
- Check for injured victims. Render first aid if necessary.
- Most lightning strike victims can be revived with CPR. Do not attempt to move severely injured victims unless absolutely necessary. Wait for emergency medical assistance to arrive.
- Take photos or video of any damage to your home or property, and report it to local emergency managers.
- Do not make unnecessary telephone calls.
- If driving, be alert for hazards on the roadway.
- Check on neighbors or relatives who may require special assistance.